



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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New Online Application Process for State Training Grants

INDIANAPOLIS (March 20, 2006) -- Indiana businesses can now apply for training grants online using a new and streamlined process announced today by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

A new web portal and application process became operational earlier this month for the state's Training Acceleration Grant program. Operated jointly by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and Indiana Economic Development Corporation, the Training Acceleration Grant program is the state's primary jobs training program. It provides financial assistance to companies and organizations committed to expanding the skills of their existing workforce through training programs that result in industry-recognized credentials.

"This new streamlined application process is one in a series of steps we are taking to make it easier for our clients to conduct business with us," said Ron Stiver, Commissioner of the Department of Workforce Development. "We want to increase the number of companies, both large and small, who receive services from us, and one way to achieve this goal is to make it easier and less bureaucratic for our clients."

Stiver said the new web portal, accessible at www.in.gov/dwd/employers/tag.html contains a pre-application form, an application form and web pages for the department to process the applications and forward them to the committee that reviews the training grant applications.

The new online application process reflects one of several changes made by the department over the last year as it seeks to market the Training Acceleration Grant program. Other changes have included a new sliding matching scale to attract small companies, and a speedier review and approval process, which has cut turnaround time in half. Early results indicate that the number of grants awarded to small businesses of less than 50 employees have increased 32 percent while overall the number of grants is up 12 percent.

The new web portal is one in a series of actions taken by the department as it continues to upgrade its various jobs and employment services for workers and companies throughout the state. The agency is in the midst of a three-year unemployment insurance modernization project that will, when fully implemented, provide a web-based system with improved access and ease of use for both claimants and employers. Last year, the

department also announced that unemployment insurance recipients would receive their unemployment benefits via Master Card or Visa branded debit cards, a move that will speed the delivery of payments to claimants, improve customer service and save the state an estimated \$1.8 million per year. The debit card program is projected to begin in late spring 2006.

The Department of Workforce Development is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies to create new jobs and improve employee skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, partners with Indiana's 26 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures and operates a statewide job placement service.